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## NOTES AND NEWS.

THE ANNOUNCEMENT, in the circular of the Seventh International Geographical Congress, that according to preceding usage the English, French, German and Italian languages are admitted as languages of the Congress, is made the subject of an interesting paper (signed R. B.) in the *Revista*, No. 16, of the Madrid Geographical Society:

It is declared to be absurd for a Geographical Congress to exclude the Spanish language, the tongue of the nation which discovered and colonized so large a part of the world, and whose records must be consulted for the proper understanding and elucidation of many of the questions submitted to the Congress.

If a knowledge of Spanish were more general among geographers, we should not so often see, as we now do, in works in other languages facts and incidents adduced as new, which have been legible to all men for two or three centuries in Spanish printed books.

In following the established usage of the International Congresses, it has been forgotten that the Spanish language is more widely spread than the French and the Italian (though French is so generally cultivated that it may claim the first place); that there are more nationalities or States of Spanish speech than of the other four taken together; that the territories of these States occupy an area four times as great as that of the German-speaking countries, one-third larger than that of the French language, and twelve times more than the extent of the Italian, counting in the protectorates and spheres of influence of the three; that the total population of the countries speaking Spanish is double that of the Italian territories; and finally that there are more geographical societies of Spanish language than of the Italian.

Reckoning the numbers of those who speak the five languages, the first place belongs to the English, the second to the German, the third to the Spanish, the fourth to the French, and the fifth to the Italian.

There are seventeen independent States of the Spanish language, three of English, one of German (besides two in which German predominates), three of French, and one of Italian. And of these five, Spanish, the tongue of seventeen nations, is the one which cannot be spoken in the International Geographical Congress.

There is no sufficient answer to this argument. At the same time it appears, on examination of the record, that the International Geographical Congress has not been consistent with itself.

The Regulations of the First Congress, held at Antwerp in 1871, of the Second, held in Paris in 1875, and of the Third, held at Venice in 1881, left the speakers free to express themselves in whatever language they preferred. At Paris Baron Richthofen spoke in German, Sir Henry Rawlinson in English, M. de Séménoff in Russian, Commendatore Cesare Correnti in Italian, M. de Hunfalvy in Hungarian, M. Veth in Dutch.

The reports of the later Congresses afford no light on this point. That of Paris, in 1889, is printed throughout in French (except some bibliographic and other notes); in those of Berne (1891) and London (1895), there are papers in English, French, German and Italian, the four languages admitted by the organizers of the Seventh Congress.

It might have been better to admit, *for publication*, none but papers in English, French and German, the three generally accepted languages; but the earlier precedent of recognizing the speaker's right to choose his own tongue ought not to be set aside in an International Congress.

THE ACADEMY of Sciences, Belles Lettres and Arts, of Rouen, offers the following prizes:

1899.—The Bouctot Prize of 500 francs, to the author of the best critical study on the works of Saint-Evremond.

1900.—The Gossier Prize of 700 francs, for the best work of vocal or instrumental music by a composer born or settled in Normandy.

1900.—The La Reinty Prize of 500 francs, to the author of the best work, either manuscript or printed (written in French), or of the best work of art illustrating the political and social history, the commerce, or the natural history of the Antilles, now or formerly in the possession of France.

1900.—The Bouctot Prize of 500 francs, to the author of the best *étude* on the Norman poets of the XVIth century.

1901.—The Bouctot Prize of 500 francs, for a work of painting, sculpture, engraving or architecture by a native or resident of Normandy.

Each manuscript submitted must bear a motto, which must be repeated on a sealed note containing the *name and residence of the author*. The note will not be opened unless the prize is won.

Works submitted must be sent in, *free*, before the 1st of June, to Dr. Coutan or to M. G. A. Prevost, Secretaries of the Academy.

M. J. DE REY-PAILHADE, of Toulouse, has submitted to the Commission appointed by the Chamber of Deputies on the 6th of February the following summary of the attempts made to apply the decimal hour as decreed by the National Convention:

At Toulouse, a member of the municipal administration reported that the clock of the municipality had been corrected to mark the decimal divisions of time; but, either from lack of skill on the part of the workmen employed or for some other reason, the clock went very badly and ceased to run at the end of three months. No date is given, but entries in account books seem to show that the experiment was tried in the first half of the year 1795.

The decree of the Convention (dated the 4 frimaire, an II.) was suspended by the law of the 18 germinal, an III., and the municipality of Toulouse resolved that the clock should be repaired and that the dial should show the decimal divisions as well as the duodecimal.

The Ecole d'horlogerie, in Paris, has in its archives the report on the new horary system, made by the jury appointed by the National Convention.

The documents of the *Almanach National*, for the years II. and III., are expressed in decimal time. It is known, from the memoirs of the English diplomatist Jackson, that in November, 1801, there was a decimal clock at the Tuileries, then occupied by the First Consul.

The Carnavalet museum possesses a magnificent decimal timepiece, and others are preserved at the Conservatoire des Arts et Métiers and at the Ecole d'horlogerie.

A special commission, appointed by the Minister of Public Instruction in 1897, is still engaged in studying the different plans proposed for the application of the decimal system to the measurement of time and of angles.

At Marseilles the new division of time was officially employed for nearly five years. For six o'clock in the evening the Marseilles authorities wrote :

"Seven hours and five tenths,"

while at Toulouse the Mayor used the following expression :

"Seven tenths and ninety two hundredths, which corresponds to seven o'clock in the evening."

There was not yet in existence a precise terminology. Reforms move slowly and it is to be remembered that the metric weights and measures only became obligatory in France on the 1st of January, 1840.

M. de Rey-Pailhade justly remarks that the conditions are very different at the present day, and he is firm in his belief that the decimal division of time will be adopted, by degrees, and without disturbance of the mental habit. This may well be and yet with no no more real advantage to mankind than if stenographic characters took the place of ordinary script.

THE CENTRAL METEOROLOGICAL OBSERVATORY, of Mexico, announces, under the date of April 10, the death of its Director, the distinguished engineer and naturalist, Don Mariano de la Bár-cena.